

## Interview with Robert L. Funseth

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

ROBERT L. FUNSETH

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: June 13, 1994

Copyright 2002 ADST

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Funseth.]

Q: Today is June 13, 1994. This is an interview with Robert L. Funseth. My name is Charles Stuart Kennedy, and it's being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Bob, I note you were born in 1926 in Minnesota. Give me something about your family background and then about you and your education.

FUNSETH: I was born in International Falls, Minnesota. I suppose that was prescient. As a matter of fact, I was born there and then reared in Western New York, near the Canadian border, so I spent a lot of time along that international border. My father - Funseth, that is a Norwegian name. My grandparents emigrated from Northern Sweden, a province called Upland, which is a Norwegian-speaking province. They were among the original settlers of what became known as Roo, Minnesota. They were homesteaders. Homesteaded west of town; cleared the land and started that community. My grandfather, Karl Funseth, he and his friends built the first church in that town. It's still there. And I visited there, and that's where my father was born. It's an unusual name. It dates back to about the 12th, 13th Century, when there was a plague in Norway in a place called Noomendahl, which is a North/South valley west of Oslo. Apparently my ancestors came on an abandoned farm.

## Library of Congress

People had all died, and they occupied it. They called it "Oondercepter, a place that we found." It's still there. Funseth is a place called Funseth Farm, etc. My great grandfather went up north as a young man when that was opened to forestry. My mother's family are French. They emigrated from the area around La Rochelle in the time of the French immigration to French Canada.

*Q: Huguenots.*

FUNSETH: They were Catholics from the La Rochelle area in the 1620s, and settled near Quebec on a farm. They lived there right up to the 19th Century when my grandfather, at the time of the Industrial Revolution, came down into New England and worked. Then he went west to St. Paul when it was just a crossroads village, met my grandmother. He was a cabinetmaker. But in order to be self-sufficient, he homesteaded and also bought a place and was one of the original settlers of Woro, Minnesota, which is on Lake of the Woods. Interesting place in the history between us and Canada because there is something called the Northwest Angle in Lake of the Woods. They made a mistake when they drew the line and discovered here was this piece of land in the Lake of the Woods.

Anyway, he cut down the trees just like my Dad's father, started a log cabin and farm and cleared it off. It's still there; still in the family. The Funseth farm is no longer in the family. But all the buildings that he built are still there. An interesting part of this man, who was more a cabinetmaker than a farmer, the Gebo farmhouse - my grandmother had been raised in a convent, city girl really; never lived in the wilderness - she played the organ. So she had an organ in their house outside of Woro. There were no churches in Woro, so all the itinerant preachers would come to their house and give services because she had an organ. Well, my grandfather one day announced, according to my Uncle Ed, that he was tired of celebrating mass in the living room of his house and couldn't get his friends, unlike the Scandinavians who all got together and helped build, so he built the first Catholic Church in Northern Minnesota by himself, with my Uncle Ed. Chopped the trees down. Had 'em lumbered. Built a white church with a steeple on it. That's sort of the background.

## Library of Congress

These farms didn't support a large family. My father went to work in International Falls, where I was born, and then came to Buffalo to work. I was raised outside of Buffalo in a little place called Ebenezer, New York. Ebenezer was founded by the present inhabitants of Amanathe Amana Society in Iowa - that makes home freezers. They were a religious group. Ebenezer is from the Book of Samuel. It says, "I place my rock here. This is my strength and I called it Ebenezer." That's sort of the family background. I was reared in this little village which was outside of Buffalo, part of a Township of West Seneca. Occupied by Seneca Indians. A very famous Seneca Indian leader lived there, called Red Jacket, who we signed treaties with. Another famous one—Joseph Brandt—also was from that area.

In fact, the land that our family owned was in the title search when my father died the family we had bought it from it had been a farm, they had bought it from the Ebenezer Society when they moved to Amana, and the previous owner, the Ebenezer Society, had been the Seneca Indians.

*Q: Where'd you go to school? Did you go to the local high school?*

FUNSETH: Ebenezer High School. There were 18 in my graduating class in 1943. From the kindergarten to the 12th grade, we were all in the same building. A very good school. In those war years, the Navy, planning for a long, long war in the Pacific, started what was called the B-12 Program. I was successful in that exam and I was sent to B-12 training at Hobart College. I went there until '44, left there, was commissioned, joined the Pacific Fleet, and then came back to Hobart after the war and finished my education.

*Q: What were you doing in the Pacific Fleet?*

FUNSETH: I was on the USS Sturgess, a troop transport. I'd been trained in a new specialty in the Navy, which was just then introduced to the fleet, called a Combat Information Center, CIC Office of Communications. Obviously, we weren't a line ship, so I was the Communications Officer—navigation, radar, signals. I was 16 when I passed the

## Library of Congress

exam. I'd just turned 17 when I went into the Navy. I remember when I was in Midshipman School, they held up my commission because they said they didn't want to commission an 18-year-old officer. So when I turned 19, then I was commissioned. Until I learned that George Bush had been commissioned at 18, I thought I was the youngest officer. But he was, so I was one of the youngest.

*Q: What sort of courses were you taking at Hobart?*

FUNSETH: Well, Hobart, a good liberal arts college. As a Navy Cadet, there had been an emphasis on math and science and engineering. When I went back, I was an Economics major, but I took English and Political Science and Sociology, and had a good, solid education. It's a very good school.

I graduated from Hobart in '48; wanted to be a writer. Ran out of money. Out in California, my first job was on the Desert Barnacle out in the California desert near the Salt and Safe. The New York Times says it's all the news that's fit to print. Our motto was "The Most Low Down Paper on Earth, published every week of the year 275 feet below sea level."

After the Desert Barnacle, I moved on to a paper in Anaheim, California called the Anaheim Gazette, which was then a weekly. While I was there, it went daily became managing editor of that paper and an Associated Press correspondent for Orange County.

A President of Hobart College made the first visit ever to the West Coast, and it prompted me to go to a dinner in his honor in Los Angeles. I'd been getting restless on the Gazette and wanted to be an editorial writer of foreign affairs. His coming out caused me to come up with the idea of returning to Hobart as a graduate student in diplomatic history. I was their first graduate student. There was some consternation among the faculty about even admitting me, I learned subsequently. So I went back to Hobart and earned a Masters in Diplomatic History and while I was there, with the encouragement of my mentor, a

## Library of Congress

wonderful Professor of Diplomatic History called Leonard Lawson, applied and was accepted to the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington.

*Q: Why diplomatic history?*

FUNSETH: Because I was interested in international relations. I wanted to report on international affairs. When I came to Washington, I still wanted to return to journalism. But then, after I got here and I'd been in summer school at Cornell for two summers, I was torn between becoming a college professor or returning to writing. At SAIS there were several senior foreign service officers teaching. They kept encouraging me—urging me—to apply for the Foreign Service. The clincher was, “You solve your dilemma because the Foreign Service is a neat compromise between being a college professor and being a writer.” I'll always remember one of these officers—I think it was Norman Burns—who told me that when you write in the Foreign Service, you're writing for a much more important audience than you would be as a reporter working for a paper, because the secretary of state and the president of the United States are going to be reading what you're writing! So I took the exam and I was successful.

*Q: You came in in 1953?*

FUNSETH: Well, there was a hiatus, if you remember. Those of us who took the '52 exam, (Eisenhower came in and Dulles—was the whole McCarthy era.) there was a suspension of promotions and of taking in new officers. So I originally started working in the Marshall Plan agency which then was known as the Mutual Security Agency. Then went into the U.S. Information Agency when it was first established. I still hadn't taken my oral examination. No one off of that register had been given an oral exam during that hiatus. I went to Tabriz to open up an information and cultural program in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan [provinces], having taken my oral before I went out and passed it. I'll always remember, it was the last day before I left and I had been the first candidate they'd allowed to give an exam to.

## Library of Congress

The reason I was able to get it is I went to Personnel and said I'd been cleared to be a Vice Consul in Tabriz. Why can't I take my orals? They offered me an immediate appointment. I told them I felt I had a moral commitment to open this program in Tabriz which had been asked for by the Shah of Iran and by Ambassador Loy Henderson. So I went to Tabriz for two years. Then, when I came back from Tabriz - I went out as a Foreign Service Staff Officer under USIS - I came back and received my FSO Commission in '56.

*Q: So you went out there in early '54?*

FUNSETH: Early '54. I went to Tehran first and spent most of the summer there working on projects. That was good because I got to know Tehran. Had an opportunity, with the encouragement of the office, to get around Iran. I went to Isfahan and Shiraz by bus. Went by Chevy Van out to Mashhad, where a friend of mine, Bruce Laingan, had been assigned as Consul. And then I went to Tabriz. I want to add what the real opportunity was that I had the occasion to meet Loy Henderson, who was my first Ambassador. I must say, at least for my generation, to have Loy Henderson as your first Ambassador: he looked like an Ambassador, he talked like an Ambassador, and was considered certainly Mister Foreign Service.

*Q: I don't know if he was considered that yet...*

FUNSETH: Well, he was certainly well respected in NEA for his work of putting together in NEA the Truman Doctrine. And to go to his staff meetings, it was a real thrill for me to sit and listen to him talk about what the issues were. When I went to Tabriz, he visited us in Tabriz for several days. So, it was very, very interesting. It was an interesting embassy. William Rountree was the Deputy Chief of Mission. There were some junior officers who have remained my friends. Maybe there was something about a first post special memories about that first assignment: Bruce Laingan, Grant Mauser, Chris Chapman were at the embassy and friends in the U.S. Information Service. David Knoll went to Mashhad and opened an information and cultural program there.

## Library of Congress

My recollection, the real priority, was of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. I subsequently had occasion in '76 to meet the Shah for the first time. He even remembered, he claimed of asking for this program—because it was just shortly after Mossadegh and the Soviet Union was strongly supportive of the Tuda Party in Iran. Azerbaijan, you may remember, and Kurdistan had been set up as puppet republics by Stalin. They speak a different dialect from Iran. They speak Azerbaijani Turkish. So there was always a separatist feeling there and there was a strong Tuda underground party. It was conducting propaganda and a hostile campaign against the Shah and against the United States. So he asked Loy Henderson to open a discreet information and cultural program to counter that in Azerbaijan. That's how I was assigned there.

Q: What was the situation while you were in Iran? I mean, you were a junior officer, you're kind of a fly on the wall in absorbing things. How did we view the Shah and his government and the situation at that time?

FUNSETH: Well, in 1954, the Shah was a symbol of reform in Iran. It was shortly after Mossadegh. The Russians were still very active there. We were then embarking on what became after Korea, then surpassed Korea, as the largest Point Four Technical Assistance Program in the world. I've always regretted that someone hasn't written a story of that period because that program (ironically it may have contributed to the counterrevolution), but at the time it certainly made a lot of sense and this was a period when we really thought we could create a network of countries and governments that were becoming increasingly democratic. A Point Four Program introduced agricultural extension in Iran, public health, modern public education across the board. It was a very good program and it was situated out in the provinces. So when I went to Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, what we were trying to demonstrate was that the United States was supporting this modernization effort of the Iranian government.

Q: *When you went to Tabriz, Tabriz covered both Kurdistan and Azerbaijan.*

## Library of Congress

FUNSETH: And Azerbaijan.

*Q: What was our post like at that time?*

FUNSETH: Well, Tabriz, first of all, Azerbaijan was the largest and most important province of Iran because it's located up in the Northwest corner. It's fertile. It supplied a lot of grain and fruit. From the Turkish conquest of Tamberlane, it still spoke a Turkish dialect and in the 19th Century and earlier the Crown Prince was always resident there because there was always concern about it. We established a consulate there before World War II or in that period to protect the American missionaries. American missionaries established a Presbyterian mission there in the 19th Century. It was a mission initially to the Nestorians, the Assyrian, Aramaic speaking people, who go back to the early schism in the church over doctrine. A patriarch named Nestorious was sent there. So they had these missionaries and we established a consulate to protect them.

Then there were periods when it was closed between World Wars I and II. Then the post was reopened there during the war as a listening post.

There is a very interesting story about the Tabriz Consulate that I used to use when I was recruiting. There was a Junior Vice Consul there named Bob Rossow. The issue of Azerbaijan is the first item on the Security Council agenda, and is still on it. It's never been taken off. The Russians had agreed to withdraw their troops after the war. So the Iranians registered a complaint with the Security Council. Vishinsky [USSR Foreign Minister] denied that the Russians were not withdrawing. Well, here's this Vice Consul sending in messages on a one-time pad on a Morse Code telegraph system from Tabriz to Tehran and then to Lake Success where Secretary of State Burns is getting these messages that the Russians not only weren't withdrawing, but in fact they were advancing! Based on that one Foreign Service Officer's report, and over the protestations of our allies who didn't want to get into a major confrontation with the Russians, Burns, on behalf of the United States, pressed the Russians very hard.



## Library of Congress

Suddenly they started withdrawing their troops. They didn't want a confrontation with us. So it was very much a listening post. It was in an old compound adjoining the American hospital. The building was in a former stable, a mud-type building. I lived in the last relic of the former great days of Tabriz. Tabriz had been visited by Marco Polo. There was a huge building called the Arc; and I lived in a house that was near that arc and learned after I'd moved into it that it had been the first American Consulate in Tabriz. We had this compound with a gate and a wall around it, and we had three Vice Consuls and a Consul. The first Consul I served under was Norman Hanna. The second was Robert Greeson, both Near East hands at that time.

*Q: What was your main job?*

FUNSETH: That was what was fun about the job. I sort of was sent up there and they said, "Do it." "Do what?" "Well, do what you think needs to be done." Some of it, it was obvious to me, like putting press releases in a Persian language newspaper in which most of the population was illiterate, wouldn't get you very far. I did a lot of things. I was invited to teach English at the University of Tabriz, which ironically was founded by the Russians as part of their separatist movement. I went into the College of Arts and Sciences and discovered that most of the students were studying English, but there weren't any native speakers. But I didn't want to be just sort of a native speaker like we have at FSI. So I got the idea, I said, "I'll teach, but let me teach a course in American Studies." That resulted, I learned that was probably the first course in American Studies ever taught in an Iranian university.

We did a lot of audio-visual. We placed 16mm projectors in theaters all over Azerbaijan and Kurdistan and had newsreel-type films; U.S. information films that were shown. We gave them the projector free and the film free. We developed a wall newspaper which was a huge, sort of enlarged poster that came out every week with photographs of what we were doing to help modernize Iran.

## Library of Congress

Instead of opening a library that someone could throw a brick through, I opened an American corner in the Tabriz public library and in the University of Tabriz Library and gave them books, encyclopedia, dictionaries, reference books, periodicals. To succeed me, we sent a young Iranian professor to the United States to study American Studies, to come back and teach. Also, I identified and sent the first Kurd who'd ever come to America under our Leader Grant Program.

I felt it was a very rewarding experience and it was quite different assignments. I literally taught; I had hundreds of young students I had taught in the university. I had a class for high school English teachers. So I had a lot of friends and it was a very interesting period.

I traveled. I wasn't married then, and I had a car and driver and an Iranian assistant and traveled all over those two provinces. Went into villages where I was the first American that they'd ever seen. I remember I went into the ancient capital of Iran called Ardiviel, a very holy city. In that building in the mayor's office, there were two pictures, one of the Shah and one of Abraham Lincoln. I don't know where he'd gotten that latter one. Not from me.

*Q: What was your impression dealing with the local government officials,?*

FUNSETH: Obviously, they were all loyal to the Shah or they wouldn't be there. Most of them were friendly, but I also was sensitive to their own feelings. They tend to be xenophobic. It's an isolated part of the country. They're a very proud people. We had to be careful that even though we were playing a very dominant role, to be sensitive to their feelings of pride. One thing that was interesting - and I remember when Khomeini came in and I'd remembered at the time - the one group of people that we never succeeded in having contact with were the mullahs. They just were not reachable by us. They didn't want to have contact with us. We would, on national days or feast days, meet one or two religious leaders in the city. But by and large, we did not have contact with them. They did not want to have contact with us.

## Library of Congress

*Q: At that time, was there a feeling that one had to be very careful about religion?*

FUNSETH: You had to be very sensitive about it. The religious issue out in the provinces was very sensitive. You had to be very careful about photographing. They had in the Shiite faith, as practiced in Iran, developed rituals and traditions. One of them, called Mooharan, is sort of a period of penance, like Lent in the Christian faith. But it can become very bloody and a period of fanaticism. You had to be very careful about that. There was a curfew in effect. There was a Russian Trade Minister ostensibly in Tabriz at the time. No foreigner was allowed to leave the city without permission. Every time you left the area of Tabriz, you had to get special permission from the Governor General wherever you went. Always received it. They were sensitive about the border areas. We were 40 miles from the Iron Curtain.

*Q: What was the view of the people you talked to, both officials and the private, of the Soviets?*

FUNSETH: I don't even recall meeting anyone who said they were pro-Soviet or pro-Pishi Bari, who was the name of the leader. There was certainly a provincial pride as Azerbaijanis. I remember the Director of Provincial Education was an Azerbaijani. The government in Tehran was gradually bringing in more Azerbaijanis into positions of responsibility.

*Q: Why?*

FUNSETH: I think they were sensitive to that, but I think the main thing was people—the whole idea of getting an education. The Shah had followed his father's practice of liberalization of women. They didn't have to wear the veil anymore, although many did. This was an issue that brought a lot of criticism of the Shah and opposition from the conservatives and from the mullahs.

## Library of Congress

Iran was then in a transition. There was land distribution going on. I'll always remember when I first came to Tehran, the former colonial British Club had been taken over by the Iranians, and it was called the Tehran Club. I remember the first or second week I was in Tehran, someone introduced me to an Iranian who said, "Oh yes, his family owned 100 villages in Azerbaijan." That was a concept I hadn't realized, that you still had a feudal society. If not legally owned. They "owned" the land. But these people were almost indentured. They lived as sharecroppers. As I recall, there were four divisions of the crop: Twenty-five percent for the land, twenty-five percent for the water, I think; twenty-five percent for tools and twenty-five percent for labor. So most of these people would stay in the same village for generations. Centuries perhaps. But they got a limited amount. With modernization and land distribution, we supported that effort to get people their own land and to get them productive and self-sufficient.

*Q: Did you have any feelings about the CIA, at that time was "messinaround"?*

FUNSETH: There have been lots of accounts published since then about the whole role of the CIA, and we certainly had an intelligence presence in Iran.

*Q: Did we have listening posts in that area or not?*

FUNSETH: I'm sure we had an intelligence presence in Azerbaijan.

*Q: How about corruption? Was this a problem for you?*

FUNSETH: I never encountered it, but there is what we call corruption, I've learned in a lot of societies is sort of accepted depending on to what extent it is carried out. But there certainly was corruption in Iran. I didn't personally observe it, but I'm sure it was going on. There's always concern when you have a big aid program, but this wasn't that apparent out in the provinces because there wouldn't be much money going out there.

## Library of Congress

I think, if you look back on that period, this was before we had some of the tension between the Shah and the United States at the end of his reign. In that period, we had enabled him to come back. We were a strong supporter of his modernization policies and I think if you go back in the reporting at the time by the press, I think most of the press reported favorably of what he was trying to achieve. There was always a debate, I suppose, within the government, had we made the correct assessment in not supporting Mossadegh? To return to that period, Mossadegh was not an easy person to negotiate with. And a very hard person to assess as to where he was really heading.

*Q: How about the modernization? Was it making many inroads?*

FUNSETH: You saw it all over! First of all, you saw young women were able to go to college. They were able to enter into professions. You saw new schools being built. They were small schools; in fact our provincial education adviser was a black educator from Virginia. His experience had been with rural black schools in Virginia, so what he was trying to do was not build something that was unrealistic, but taking what they had and making a curriculum that made more sense.

Public health. We introduced public health. Public health clinics, pre-natal care. The infant mortality rate in Iran was amazing. In that period, we succeeded in vaccinating the population against smallpox. I remember when I was there, there was an epidemic of smallpox which, even in the 1950s, was unusual.

But we succeeded in addressing that and in agricultural extension. There was a lot. Transportation. Infrastructure. All kinds of things that our aid program did. The modernization of the armed forces of Iran at that time.

*Q: You left there in 1956?*

FUNSETH: Yes.

## Library of Congress

*Q: And came back to Washington?*

FUNSETH: Yes.

*Q: What were you doing in Washington? How long were you there?*

FUNSETH: Well, when I came back from Tabriz, I had to make this decision whether I was going to resign from USIS. And I must say they made it very difficult for me to leave. There were a couple of great opportunities; one opening a new information and cultural program in Aleppo, I remember, or going to Cairo. As a Foreign Service Staff Officer, I'd gone from an eight to a four in rank. But I decided that if I was going to follow this career of foreign affairs, then I ought to go into the Foreign Service. So I made that decision and entered the Foreign Service in the fall of '56.

*Q: Did you go abroad right away?*

FUNSETH: Well, I was at FSI [the Foreign Service Institute] and was put in French language training. During this period, through mutual friends, I met my wife who was one of Loy Henderson's secretaries in the Department. He was then the deputy undersecretary for Management. We were married, and my first post was as junior political officer in Beirut, Lebanon.

*Q: You arrived in Beirut in '57. Things picked up shortly thereafter. What was the situation?*

FUNSETH: Well, I was there from 1957 through '59. This was in the aftermath of the Suez War. The promulgation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, with its acceptance by Lebanon. Embraced by Lebanon, which was the only country that did. The President of Lebanon was Camille Chamoun. The Foreign Minister was Charles Malik, who had been President of the United Nations General Assembly, and was a renowned statesman.

## Library of Congress

Lebanon was then living up to its reputation as the Switzerland of the Middle East. But there were ominous signs because even as I arrived, there was an election campaign going on and Nasser was very strong in Cairo and was making an appeal to Arabs, including in Lebanon and in Syria. The whole history of Lebanon and Syria and how it had been carved out in the French mandate was still an issue. Then Chamoun was making indications that he would serve a second term and have the constitution amended as an independent republic. It had only become independent at the end of World War II. One of the provisions in the constitution was a one-term President. This issue divided the Lebanese. There were people that were certainly not pro-Nasser who did not favor Chamoun succeeding himself. Nasser was reportedly supporting people who were opposed to Chamoun. There were people in Lebanon who, I suppose, some internationalist wanted to go so far as to become even much closer to Nasser. During this period, you had the United Arab Republic created in which Syria became part of Cairo. And some of which you're seeing played out in the Syrian relationship with Lebanon now. It was certainly apparent at that time.

Q: I find that the role of a political officer is often misunderstood. A Junior Political Officer in Lebanon, which obviously was at an interesting political time. How did you go about your work? I mean, who told you what to do and how did you go about doing it?

FUNSETH: Well, basically it's what my mentors at the School of Advanced International Studies said it was. The Ambassador is reporting on political developments at his level and the Deputy Chief of Mission—we had a two-person political section, sometimes it was three, augmented with an officer—you report on the political developments in Lebanon as they related to our own interests. Very similar to my training as a newspaperman. You were a reporter, and that basically was the way I operated. Established a broad range of contacts in all of the political factions, both pro-Chamoun and anti-Chamoun, to find out really what was going on. Here's a political officer's dream post because the Lebanese are

## Library of Congress

so accessible and like to talk. So basically I reported on those issues of personalities that we were interested in.

Q: At that time, was there much of . . . (I'm not sure how to describe it.) the Shiite, the poor Arabs. Did they have much or were they kind of off to one side?

FUNSETH: Well, the Shiites as a political force have come in recent times, it wasn't that apparent. But it was a communal society in which I remember the leader, There was one who was pro-Chamoun who was the speaker of the Parliament. Then one who was probably anti-Chamoun, General Chehab came in became speaker of the Parliament. So we had contacts in the Shiites. The Sunni community was divided, reflecting a history of the Sunni community in Beirut which dated back to the Ottoman times. Then the Sunnis in the north that had really been brought more close to Syria. The Colomi family was very active in that.

Then you had the Maronites who were the dominant Christian community. The largest Christian minority were the Greek Orthodox. You had the political parties sort of reflecting these religious groupings. Then there was an interesting new party just starting. Its leader in Lebanon was Jumblatt, who was also in the feudal tradition, leader of the Druze. Here you had this Druze feudal leader who was ideologically trying to be a social democrat and attracted a lot of young people - Greek Orthodox - it was trying to be a secular party but very Arab nationalist. The movement was just then starting, and wasn't that strong in neighboring countries, but it was beginning. Nasser was a member. It was cutting across the political spectrum. So you had people identified primarily with their religious confessional group and then by village. But then you had this other crossing.

Beirut was also interesting because of the American University of Beirut with its American connections. You had the French tradition, especially among the Maronites. The French University, St. Joseph, had a monopoly on training the lawyers. If you wanted to go into a political life, you primarily were a lawyer. You had a free press there. A very active



## Library of Congress

intellectual community. On the surface, it was a very young country. It had been enlarged when it became independent. It demonstrated, even the following year during the first Lebanese civil war and then subsequently, how fragile this union was.

Q: Among the officers what was the view towards Nasser at the time?

FUNSETH: Well, after all, it was the Eisenhower Administration. Eisenhower had just been reelected and had opposed the Anglo-French-Israeli war. I think we were still trying to reach an accommodation of some kind with Nasser. But here in Lebanon was a government that was committed to democracy, to western values and ideals and wanted and asked for our support. Then Nasser supported to elements that we thought were inimical to our interests emerged. That influenced our attitudes at least towards the Nasser elements in Lebanon.

Q: *Donald Heath was your ambassador?*

FUNSETH: Donald Heath was the ambassador when I arrived there. Before the war began in '58, Robert McClintock arrived as ambassador.

Q: *What was Donald Heath like as ambassador?*

FUNSETH: Well, I never got to know him very well. He'd come from Vietnam. For me, as still a junior officer, he was certainly a very pleasant man to be around. He always wore a white suit, I remember. I think he, perhaps from his Vietnam experience, and this is just an hypothesis on my part, I'm not sure it's correct, but I think he'd sort of been involved with the U.S. support of Diem in Saigon and he found a strong man and courageous leader like Chamoun and you supported him. But he wasn't there even a year before McClintock arrived. Then you had this contested election in which Chamoun had a narrow minority. But the issue of the expiration of his term was coming in 1958. And there was an incident—an assassination—and you had the Muslims starting to close off their border, and then you had the murder of the Iraqi king.

## Library of Congress

*Q: July 14, 1958.*

FUNSETH: Yes. I remember that very well because there was a curfew and I had a political assistant, a Lebanese, who worked for me who used to just monitor the radio at home. He picked up this report from Baghdad that the king had been murdered. He called me on the phone and told me what had happened. I really had to debate, because there was a curfew, but anyway I got in my car and didn't get stopped by any Lebanese police and made it to the embassy. I woke up Ambassador McClintock, and we sent a "Flash" [top priority telegram] into the Department that we had picked up this report. Q: Let's talk about how this played out, because that really started things off out there.

FUNSETH: I think that leading up to this there was a division in reporting. There were elements, especially in the intelligence community, that were reporting from their sources that Nasser was supporting elements in Lebanon that were opposed to our interests. Nasser was supported by the Soviet Union, so there was a big power play. In the Political section, I was reporting that the issue was Chamoun's desire to seek reelection, which was the real issue, and that there were people - Lebanese nationalists, I can think of several prominent people - who were opposed to his seeking reelection because they believed it would be too disruptive to the compact that held them all together. After the coup, there was a great period of uncertainty in the Middle East. No one knew what was going to happen. The Muslim quarter of Beirut, called the Basta, erupted that night and Chamoun invoked the Eisenhower Doctrine and asked for help. The President agreed.

I'll always remember that before that time I lived in an area in the center of town. Being a junior officer, I couldn't afford to live up in the high rent district around the Chancery, luckily because we lived in an old quarter of Beirut near where the President lived. Not until after we moved in it was the old Jewish Quarter that dated back to the 17th Century when the Sephardic Jews were expelled from Spain. We lived in that Quarter, and I remember the

## Library of Congress

first thing that happened was that I evacuated my wife from that apartment and brought her to a hotel near the Embassy.

A lot of the dependents left. The fleet was off-shore and it was to land at noon the next day. I remember that morning I was called up. We all met early in the morning and the ambassador announced that the U.S. Marines from the Sixth Fleet were going to land at noon, and that his wife, the DCM's wife, and the wife of the CIA Station Chief had left on the 6:00 flight that morning. They never invoked mandatory evacuation but it was alert one, two, three. I guess it was two, but strongly urged. I remember a lot of dependents left on a cruise ship that was in port.

I had just been married. My wife and I didn't want to be separated. I went to the Ambassador and said, "It isn't a mandatory evacuation." And he said, "That's right." So Marilyn stayed. She was one of three wives who stayed behind.

Anyway, it was a very tense period. The Marines came in and did land. They secured the airport. There was a debate about Jordan and it was finally decided the British would go into Jordan, which they did. After the Marines secured the airport, the next day they were going to move in from the airport which is south of the city, up the road along the Mediterranean and into the city to the port and secure that road so the ships could come in. It was probably one of the most exciting, intense days of my life. Remember, Radio Moscow was putting out that this was going to be World War III. We were in the eye of the storm, there were headlines around the world. Khrushchev was-

Q: I was in Rostenur, Saudi Arabia, at the time. We kept looking out the window. We knew about the landing. We couldn't tell anybody. Everybody was waiting for the mob to arise.

FUNSETH: There have been documents released that I've recently seen that the King oSaudi Arabia's pleas to Eisenhower strongly influenced the decision. He was urging him to do this.

## Library of Congress

Anyway, it became a very tense period because General Chehab, the Commander of the Lebanese Army, had remained aloof from all of this. The patriarch was not pro-Chamoun. No one knew which way the Army was going to go. Going back, one of the problems was communication. The Embassy was unable to communicate with the Sixth Fleet that we could see. We had to go through Washington to get to the Sixth Fleet, to the landing Commander. All the ambassadors were coming in to see the American ambassador before they sent telegrams back. I was sort of at the residence with McClintock ushering people in. I'll always remember the French ambassador, who had an apartment overlooking the beach, and remembering the French, as I recall, were three days late going into Port Said. He was talking to me before he went in to see McClintock. He said, "I was standing on my balcony watching and when the first raft touched on the beach, my second hand hit twelve o'clock."

Apparently, that was a real effort for him because those Marines had been aboard those ships for a long, long time and they were headed back to Greece, and they had to turn around and they weren't all that sure they weren't landing in a hostile environment until they saw young boys selling 7-Up and Coca Cola.

That was the morning when I evacuated my wife and I remember McClintock swearing everyone to secrecy in the room. You can't tell your spouse or anybody what's going to happen. Of course, the Sixth Fleet had already been in with mine sweepers and everything. I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, obviously we'll keep the confidence, but I want you to know that they're selling boat rides from the St. George Hotel out to the landing area. 'Come see the American Marines in action.' The curious are going out to see it."

Anyway, it was a very tense day when they landed. There were no hostile fire. We did lose a pilot, I remember. His plane burned out and crashed in the hills over Beirut. It was a very tense period because we didn't know what was going to happen next. The Commander of the Marine Force was a brigadier general named Wade. I'd been at the Embassy all night. Very early in the morning the ambassador's secretary called me. We had then since

## Library of Congress

moved from the old Chancery on rue Clemency down to this converted apartment house right on the beach which was where we were located when it was blown up. My office, being the junior political officer, was in the kitchen of that apartment. The ambassador had sort of a penthouse apartment overlooking the bay. Came in the room and there was this brigadier general standing there on one foot. Very nervous. I don't know who else was in the room. McClintock says, "Bob, this is General Wade." I noticed he had empty holsters. I learned when he arrived at the chancery, a corporal disarmed him. Wouldn't let him come up with it.

Anyway, McClintock said, "The Marines are going to move in from the airport today. I can't reach General Chehab. We have reports that the Lebanese Army is deployed against the Marines." He was very excited. He said something like, "Bob, you get the hell out there and prevent a war until I find Chehab!" I had Blanche call down to the motor pool and get a car and then, because I didn't speak Arabic (I spoke French) and most of the people in the Lebanese Army spoke French, (there was an Arabic language school in Beirut at the time), I called down to one of the language officers who just died this past week, Slater Black. (I think he participated in this.)

*Q: Yes, I have his interview.*

FUNSETH: Anyway, I called down. Slater was in a special operation. I said, "Slater, meet me in the lobby." We didn't have cue cards in the motor pool. Wouldn't you know, the car that came up was the old Plymouth that had a weak battery and no springs. In this car we get with the general in the back. Slater and I are sitting in the front seat and off we go on the way to the airport.

Well, I had remembered my own reconnoitering that there was a UN compound on the way out to the airport and that I had seen the armor of the Lebanese army, which I think was three or four light tanks on semis, had been parked there the day before. So I said, "Let's swing by there." Sure enough, the tanks weren't on the flatbeds. So we continued

## Library of Congress

down the road and there was a circle there with the road that goes to the beach and there's a tank. There's a back road from the airport which the general didn't know about. We didn't know whether his unit was coming up the main road from the airport or taking this back road. So we stopped there and I remember Slater and I crawled up on the guy and asked whether we could come up. This Lebanese sergeant spoke English and I introduced myself. I said, "You know, the American marines landed yesterday." He said, "Yes." We talked a little bit. I tried to get some contact point. My recollection is that he had an aunt in Toledo. I said, "You know, the marines were invited in by your government. They're just going to be driving down the road here to secure the fort. What are your orders when this column comes down the road?" He said, "I'll ask my second lieutenant who's up above here listening in on our conversation." By that time, the general was really getting nervous. He's sticking his head out the window. So I said, "Well, look, when this marine column comes down the road, remember your aunt in Toledo!" So we continued down the airport road and there's four Lebanese tank guns zeroing in. You go around a circle and you head towards the airport—a double highway.

Off to the left, there was a sort of an athletic camp for the Lebanese army and in the trees there I saw a Lebanese infantry company digging trenches. Meanwhile, the American reporters of the International Press were following me all over town. When they saw me leave the Embassy, they jumped into a taxi and followed us out. So as we come up over the rise on this divided highway, there comes the rumbling marine amphibious group. So it bounced over and stopped. General Wade gets out. There was a Colonel. His name begins with an H. All black-faced. I think a military attache was there. We started to talk.

Then I realized a couple of things. One, this marine amphibious group didn't have all that much ammunition. Indeed, four Lebanese tanks were a problem for them. A Lebanese infantry company was also a problem. It wasn't a sure thing. Moreover, they didn't want to open fire anyway. But it was a very, very tense situation. And then the Lebanese air force started flying above us. At that point—it's a long time ago—Slater went off someplace and the attach# left. I was sort of there alone. I remember telling General Wade that these

## Library of Congress

reporters could hear what we were saying. So they called up a squad of marine riflemen; young kids with guns. I remember they pushed the press back and they said, "Make like birds and fly away!"

So they made this circle. Oh, before I left the ambassador's office, when I went out the door, he said, "One thing. If you get that column moving before I get back out there, remember that we want . . . a tank and some men up to the residence to guard that compound." We weren't guarding the chancery, but we were guarding his residence. I was wondering what that was about.

So then—and this may be a little off—but the incidents are right. The sequence. At this point a Lebanese officer arrives on the scene from General Chehab. So we talked back and forth. I think even Admiral Holloway comes out at this point. Anyway, he finally said he could agree and we plotted the road by which the column would go. It would hug the coastline, even though there were some difficult places for tanks to get through all along the Cornish into the city. Not go through the center of the city. We finally worked that out, and that was agreeable.

Then I had this dilemma. Should I tell him that we're going to peel off some vehicles to go to the residence or should I not say anything? I decided I'd better. Good lesson in the principle of diplomacy because I didn't know—supposing we'd peeled them off and we didn't have an understanding. We had reports that the Lebanese army were coming out between us and I didn't know where they were. So I was really agonizing over it. I finally said, "Major, oh by the way, when the column goes to the left towards the St. George Hotel, we're going to peel off a couple of vehicles and there are going to be a few marines who are going to be at our old compound on rue Clemency to guard the residence." He said, "That's not within my authority. My authority was..." And he was a good military officer. He was told to agree to a certain route. He said, "We're going to have to check that out." We started moving anyway with that issue unresolved. The Military Attach# - Colonel Haad was his name - said, "We're going to get moving." I don't even know if the

## Library of Congress

general was there. "Who the hell knows this route? This isn't the route we're supposed to take. Can you lead us in?" I said, "Yes." All these marines are in flack suits. And I'm in a seersucker suit. I thought, "Well, I'm going to crawl into the lead armored vehicle."

All of a sudden, the jeep comes up. Here's a 17, 18 year-old kid driving the jeep in a flack suit, a marine photographer sitting in the back seat and me in a seersucker suit. And Colonel Haad and they all get back into their armored vehicles and close the hatches down.

At that point, Stu, I thought to myself, "Funseth, you're supposed to be a smart fellow. What in the world are you doing, sitting in the lead vehicle, coming over the hill, facing a Lebanese Arab infantry company?" At that point, what had been sort of not a serious war, became a very serious war to me. And off we go. At that point, Ambassador McClintock arrives with Holloway and more exchange and we then stop at this physical education camp where these troops are. And there in what had been the little room of—a pretty big room—whoever ran that little training facility, was General Chehab at the desk, chain smoking cigarettes and I even think maybe the guy's bed was in there. Here we are: Admiral Holloway,

*Q: Commander of the Sixth Fleet.*

FUNSETH: I think the Sixth Fleet Commander. No, he was that Admiral in London who had been made Supreme Allied Commander, or something, over the Navy, and everybody. General Wade and there may have been another admiral, McClintock and me and Chehab. He's on the phone and obviously there was a very tense situation. The additional Lebanese troops had come in in that beach area between us and the airport.

Chehab wasn't quite sure what was going to happen. He was trying to work out some peaceful entry. The marine general was getting increasingly concerned that it was going to become more and more difficult. So at one point, he just whispered in my ear, "Tell the Ambassador that I want to move." So I told the ambassador. I'm not absolutely sure of this,



## Library of Congress

but McClintock and I were whispering and either I came up with the idea or he did, or we both did, "Why don't you invite Chehab to ride with you and then the Lebanese soldiers will see their commander is leading." So he put it to Chehab. Chehab was really perspiring and he agreed. So they get into the ambassador's old Cadillac with flags flying. They're the lead car. Then behind them, I guess, was the marine general in that beat-up old Plymouth with no shock absorbers, and then me in the jeep, and then the armored column behind us.

As we get up by the beach area, it all stops. I ran up and McClintock said, expletive deleted, "There's a problem in the back now and the General and I are going to have to go back and make sure the Lebanese troops are obeying his order. Lead 'em in and I'll catch up with you." Then I remember asking him, "What about the group that's supposed to go to the Embassy?" The General said, "You take the first three units and lead them to the chancery and the driver will take me with the rest of them ." So we split. I remember leading the marines down the main street outside AUB [the American University of Beirut]. Everyone's applauding. We pull up in front of the old chancery. Well, there was a person who lived in—and you may have known him—Colonel William Eddy.

Q: *Oh, yes.*

FUNSETH: Vice President of Tapline.

Q: *A very famous Arabist.*

FUNSETH: President of my alma mater, Hobart College. He mounted the whole intelligence operation in North Africa. Born in Beirut. His father had been a missionary. He lived in an apartment house overlooking the old chancery on Rue Clemency. If you remember, that was a high-rise. He and David Dodge sent a letter to President Eisenhower opposing the landing of the troops or U.S. intervention if it was there to

## Library of Congress

support violating the constitution of General Chehab in office. But he's a Marine from World War I. He was the first U.S. Minister to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

*Q: He translated for Roosevelt.*

FUNSETH: At Bitter Lake Conference, yes. But his commission as U.S. Minister—to show you what kind of Marine he was—although he's a professor of English, President Roosevelt said, “Colonel William Eddy, U.S. Marine Corps retired.” Anyway, as we pulled in, what had happened as we had arbitrarily taken these three vehicles was I'd split up a Marine Company. When we finally stopped in front of that chancery, I was confronted with a very angry young Marine Officer, either a Lieutenant or a Captain, who had lost half of his company. He was furious! Really steaming! I looked up and there was Colonel Eddy and Mary looking down at us.

So I told him what it was. By then, I began to wonder about this action and wondered if it might not have something to do with President Chamoun's house that was another half mile down the street. Anyway, I told this young Lieutenant, “In your Marine Corps orientation, did you ever hear of Colonel William Eddy, U.S. Marine Corps? He's a much-decorated Marine Officer from World War I.” I briefly outlined his career. And I said, “He's a real loyal Marine. You know what would really gladden his heart? Why don't you ask your platoon to salute him?” That was a great idea! So they lined up all the Marines to present arms and saluted William Eddy. Eddy was so delighted he almost fell off the balcony!

How much more time do we have?

*Q: Why don't we finish up Lebanon?*

FUNSETH: It became more interesting. Eisenhower was President, had gotten enough that there was some division in the embassy between the intelligence community and the political reporting from the Embassy. [It also was evident] that there was some

## Library of Congress

disagreement in the embassy about supporting Chamoun. It was our contention, as I've said earlier, that the real issue in Lebanon was Chamoun seeking reelection.

*Q: This was the intelligence community seeing this as a Nasser, comSoviet-right thinking.*

FUNSETH: Yes, and of course there was Nasser money coming in there. It wasn't benign. I mean, the prime minister was. . . they attempted to assassinate him. He was evacuated out. He may have lived the rest of his life in exile in Turkey. It was very tense.

There was a lot of bloodshed! There was common knowledge that Nasser was putting money and arms in there. It was coming across the border. There had been UN security. A UN Observers' group had been put in there before the landing and they had established posts. It was a constructive lesson on depending on the UN because during the daylight they were watching everything, but then the stuff had come in at night. Arms were coming in there. It was a very tense situation!

I've always felt that President Eisenhower made the right decision for the wrong reason. His instincts on it were correct, but not for the reason presented. Although you didn't know what was going to happen after that letter. Anyway, so he sends Murphy out.

*Q: Robert Murphy?*

FUNSETH: Robert Murphy comes out. I'll always remember it because I was used to this sort of cryptic messages that I had sent. Murphy came out and McClintock went out to meet him. We all knew that there was this split. He made the first jet flight to the Middle East. The Air Force flew him out in a tanker or something, a jet, and he flew non-stop from Dover to Beirut Airport. I remember we couldn't get him out of the air because they didn't have anything to do it.

I'll relate the following incident chronologically, but I didn't learn about it until I was back in Washington the following year. Colonel Eddy told me.

## Library of Congress

Murphy was in North Africa, and Murphy and Eddy became friends during the North African campaign, so they knew one another. Eddy told me that Murphy came to see him and said, "Bill, I understand you're opposed to our landing." Eddy never told me while I was there. It will show you how discreet and correct he is. He said, "Bob, these troops are in here to jam Chamoun down the throat of the Lebanese people. You're damn right I'm opposed to it. But if we're coming in here to uphold the Lebanese constitution and the Republic of Lebanon, then I'd support it." Then he said, "Bob, just follow your instincts as a good Political Officer and get all the facts before you make up your mind. Talk to the opposition. Find out."

So, that then explains what then happened the next morning. Now, Murphy is meeting with the country team. I don't want this to sound self-serving. I'm going to make this as accurate as I can, but this is what happened. Apparently, I learned, Murphy is sitting there and he's in a white suit. He may have already spoken to Chamoun. At this point, as visitor, he wanted to talk to the opposition. So he asked who in the country team. We had the ambassador, the DCM, the station chief, the chief of the political section there. Did they personally know the opposition? They didn't. Murphy said, "Well, who in the Embassy does know the opposition?" McClintock said, "Well, I have a Junior Political Officer who has maintained contact with the opposition." So he said, "Send him up."

I get this call, again from Blanche, the same secretary who told me to come up a couple of days earlier. She said, "Get up here right away!" So I ran up and came into this office and there is Murphy. I'm not awestruck, but I can tell you I'm not relaxed! Here's the great Robert Murphy! He knows. He said, "You know, I've reached a point in my visit where I thought it might be interesting to talk to the opposition. I understand you know some of the opposition." He already had decided this. He said, "Who would you suggest I talk to first?" I said, "Well, there are three Sunnis: Abdul Leafi, Saab Salaam, and Rashid Karami are three people that you need to talk to." He said, "Can you arrange to have those appointments set up?" I said, "Yes, I think I can." And I did.

## Library of Congress

Apparently, the next day he asked for another opposition leader and no one in the country team knew. It became an uncomfortable joke, and he said, "Well, I suppose Bob knows that person." So, my brief moment of glory. Each day I would go up and set up another appointment for him with Kamal Jumblatt, Rashid Karami, Abdul Leafi, Sami So.

Then Murphy went to Cairo. My recollection is that when he went to see Nasser, Nasser kept him cooling his heels for several hours. But Murphy refused to take umbrage at that. He just stuck it out.

[Back in Beirut] he came around to what had been the political section, which was largely me. My position was that we should support the Lebanese constitution and Chamoun. There are other people who have written memoirs about this incident of how we had flip-flopped on our policy.

The Parliament then met later in the summer and Bud Ramzar, who had then come out as Chief of the Political Section, and I went to witness this election of Chehab. The whole city was cordoned off. We had to walk the last half a mile. My wife, of course, knows where I am. When the ballot reached where he had been named president, the Army started shooting. It sounded like the whole civil war had started over again. I remember coming back to the chancery. The new government came in and all of my contacts: Karami was prime minister, Raymond Eddy was in, Kamal Jumblatt, Philippe Takla as foreign minister. All of these people came in.

Ambassador McClintock—I don't know if he ever knew them, knew them by reputation—he was relatively short, very dapper, had a grey moustache, and very self-confident. Anyway, I came into his office and he said, "Well, Bob, you're such an expert with the opposition. Let's exchange contact lists." So a lot of the people that I had developed contacts with, then became the ambassador's, the DCM's. Then I had the opposition!

## Library of Congress

But out of all this there was one [overall] experience. You know, the Arabs as a people remember, if not friends, people who've been loyal to them. When I left Lebanon (it never happened to me again in my Foreign Service career) these opposition people that I didn't have [social] contact with had a dinner in my honor, [given by the foreign minister]. And other ministers.

When I came back to Washington, I was assigned to UN Political Affairs. That fall, Rashid Karami, as prime minister came to and addressed the General Assembly. Eisenhower invited him down [to Washington] to meet with him here. That's when the planes landed right at National Airport. They came down commercially. I went around to the Lebanese Desk and didn't expect to be included. Karami was coming to the Department, and I would at least like to be in the Lobby and say hello to him. I was made to understand, "Look, you're not involved in this anymore." So, I didn't press it.

That night - we were living in an apartment in Fairlington - I get a phone call from the Lebanese Desk Officer. His superiors had ruled that I shouldn't be included. He said, "Are you free for lunch tomorrow?" I said, "Why?" He said, "You won't believe it! The plane lands. The Chief of Protocol is standing there. Some Assistant Secretary is there. Rashid Karami gets off the plane and starts looking. Comes down to the bottom of the ramp. Shakes hands with the Chief of Protocol. 'Where's Bob Funseth?' I can't believe he isn't here to welcome me to Washington!" Oh, boy! So I was included. Karami personally included me in every event that he was involved in. I think he was letting people know that there was someone at least in that Embassy who listened to him and he had confidence in reporting their position, and he wanted us to know he appreciated that.

Q: One of the things I've found interesting in these interviews is often how—it's not repeated in such dramatic terms, but—an embassy tends to get so absorbed with the government they end up by throwing the opposition to a junior officer, or maybe if it's a

## Library of Congress

labor type government, maybe the Labor Attach#. Then a new government comes in and the embassy power structure is sort of helpless because they haven't done this.

FUNSETH: First of all, it was so tense between Chamoun and the opposition. And believe me, not all of the opposition were favorable to our interests. It was very emotional, and I think that probably McClintock hadn't been there that long to develop contact, but I think they were respectful. The fact that McClintock tolerated my extensive contacts with the opposition. My telegrams were reported—whatever I wrote went in. I guess the Embassy was covered. I take your point, and it's something you have to be careful about, but we did have contact at least with one political officer.

*Q: I note in looking in the Biographic Register that you got commendation for your work in getting the Marines in. What did you get?*

FUNSETH: Well, first of all, I was part of a small group of officers who the NC (?) got a Distinguished Honor Award for that whole operation. Then from General Paul Adams, Commander of the 82nd Airborne: I was one of several Foreign Service officers who were given citations by him personally when he left. That was in recognition for, as they said at the time, my courage and diplomatic skill in getting them into Beirut without a shot being fired, and then my subsequent role as Political Adviser.

*Q: Did you work as a political adviser, sort of an intermediatobetween the military and...*

FUNSETH: Well, General Adams I don't think was four stars, but he certainly was three stars. I never briefed him personally, but his G-2 [intelligence officer], who was a full colonel, saw me every morning and I briefed him fully. That briefing was provided General Adams. There wasn't one incident between our troops and the Lebanese. [Our military] had absolute rigid control.

The 82nd Airborne was camped where Marc Anthony's Roman Legions had camped near the airport in an olive grove. The owner of that grove filed for an indemnity just as his

## Library of Congress

ancestors had done against the Roman soldiers for cutting down a tree or something. I remember when they had their first liberty in Beirut that Adams personally rode—sort of a Patten-like figure—with pearl pistols. He rode around in an armed jeep with a machine gun. Any guy who behaved in the slightest way that wasn't correct was shipped out. I remember we had the UN observers, Odbol General, there was Gala Plaza from Ecuador, and there was a man from Pakistan.

*Q: Odbol was from Norway, wasn't he?*

FUNSETH: He was Norwegian. They were the UN Observer group. Well, when our troops first arrived and then the 82nd Airborne Division came in, we decided we'd have a reception at the Ambassador's house to introduce UNIGIL to Adams and his staff. The city was sort of cordoned off, so you didn't want the general getting lost. I remember I was in front of the embassy and the general had had this new sedan flown in. Randy Higgs was the DCM and the General was there in the front. Randy said, "Bob, you'd better get in the car and make sure he gets [seated correctly]." So I jump in the car and [the general] sort of freezes. I quickly introduce myself.

I don't know if you've ever been in that old Lebanese house which was a residence. There was a little patio and there's the three UN people and some other people and in strides this general - a paratrooper with his boots and his two guns. He comes walking in and Ambassador McClintock calls me and says, "Bob, you think you can disarm the General?" So I walked over to the general: "General, you think you'd be more comfortable if you checked your sidearms with me?" He sort of hesitated for a moment and then he took off his two six-guns and handed them to me. I put them in the ambassador's bedroom.

\*\*\*

*Q: Today is the eighth of July, 1994. Bob, the last time I had you leaving Lebanon. Would you give me your appraisal at the time, and in subsequent years, the common feeling*



## Library of Congress

within the Foreign Service, and the professionals, about the effectiveness of this landing in Lebanon?

FUNSETH: A couple of observations. I think I might expand it into the UN also because that was my first experience with the UN Observer operation. I think, as we discussed in the last meeting, President Eisenhower made the right decision probably for the wrong reasons. The effect of that landing, which was very successful and a credit to the United States, resulted in a period of truce, at least in the history of Lebanon. It also gave the Lebanese time to regather and reunify themselves as a nation. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. There are a couple of factors. One, I think, looking back at it — and I never served in Lebanon again but I maintain an interest in it — is that when King Hussein of Jordan expelled the Palestinians, the PLO {Palestine Liberation Army}, a lot of them came into Lebanon. I think that was more than that fragile political structure could digest. That led to other developments.

A lot of other outside players—Israel became very much involved in the internal political situation in Lebanon. For its own reasons, Israel got involved with the Phalange Christians. A guy I knew very well, Pierre Jamaille, and his sons, his successors. So, I think at the time, it was the correct move. I think also, in retrospect, that it was realized we're not in a position to do that anymore. We had massive resources. We were a world power and we were prepared to exercise that power.

I think the other thing is that the military operation—you can't fine tune it. There are too many different people involved. No matter what we were recording, by the time it filtered down to the G-2 of the landing party, I don't think they had a clear idea of all the facts on what to expect. Certainly, when a larger force came in, from my own experience in briefing General Paul Adams, he had a very imperfect sense of what was the reality. But they quickly adjusted to it, and I thought acted very responsively, and [consequently], I think, made a powerful impression on the Lebanese. The troops were well disciplined,

## Library of Congress

attractive young Americans. They fanned out in the perimeter around Beirut, including the overlooking mountains.

I remember after things had settled down, my wife and I drove up the mountains to have lunch. It was quite a sight driving up the road and the Sixth Fleet anchored down there below. We went into this hotel and there were Lebanese families with their daughters and they were chaperoning a little social event that Sunday afternoon, with GI's and Marines who weren't on duty, dancing, and having a good time. First of all, the troops were very well behaved, very well disciplined. They made a powerful impression on the Lebanese.

[The landing] permitted the [Lebanese] to regroup and exercise their constitution. The elected General Chehab. I think that that period then probably was reasonably tranquil. Unfortunately, they just couldn't escape their own history. Many of the people that I knew rather well at that time, Camille Chamoun, and others—Kamal Jumblatt—those political leaders hung on in protecting their own clans and their own groups, and they never came together again. Then, in recent years, you had Syria reintroduce itself. Syria was a factor even then because through the United Arab Republics and the Syrian infiltration, the whole [Syrian influence and] effect in Northern Lebanon.

I was thinking about it. It is a very interesting thing for me because I went from Beirut to the UN up there where this was being played out in the UN Security Council. Lebanon, a very small country, had a very unusual Foreign Minister, world class, in Charles Malik. He represented Lebanon before the Security Council. Dag Hammarskjöld was then Secretary General. The UN sent out this observer group, UNIGIL. They followed conventional UN military procedures. They'd establish places. But everyone knew the infiltration was still taking place at night on back roads. But that wasn't reporting. So the impression you get from reading the UNIGIL reports, and what was being reported in the United Nations, in fact what was happening on the ground, there was a disconnect in reality. It pointed out to me—I learned a lesson at that time—you have to be very careful in how much you can depend on a UN operation. First of all, you don't have that much control over it; secondly,

## Library of Congress

it's imperfect. You may hope it's going to expose, as Lebanon did, infiltration, but it didn't. So it's very much a political instrument.

It was exciting times. I remember Hammarskjold coming to Beirut. Then, of course, we landed with the UN there present when we came in and then after we left. Those are my thoughts.

I think I also mentioned a Marine Amphibious Landing Group come over the beach and then they were followed by the 82nd Airborne, and hour after hour for days planes landed, and they're taking up positions. But I remember, as I think I recounted in the last interview, wanting to negotiate a Status of Forces agreement and this lawyer telling me that the Air Force had 10,000 people on the way into Turkey. If you could be up in the sky, you'd see airplanes nose to tail across from the Mediterranean back onto the Atlantic Coast. Again, that demonstrates for us as Foreign Service, when you bring the military in, you don't have complete control. It's the whole problem with communication that I pointed out in the last meeting. There was a possibility of a serious mishap on the beach, which I recounted in the last meeting which I participated in, to some extent, in preventing that from happening, but I might not have been successful. Whereas, when they landed the day before, we at the Embassy had no way of communicating with this Amphibious Force that was over the horizon. General Chehab was proposing sort of a peaceful entry into the port, and not what could be perceived by some factions in Lebanon as a hostile landing on the beach. Indeed, the Army perceived it as that.

So this whole problem of communications is something we're still working on. I remember participating in exercises with the Atlantic Command and I can't remember if I mentioned it to you, but the Marine officer who was in charge of the Marine Guards in the Middle East subsequently was the Colonel in charge of the landing party in the Dominican Republic. They exercised, tried to learn from the lessons of the Beirut experience and they still had the same communication problem. The embassy couldn't communicate with the

## Library of Congress

landing force. It came through Washington and through command, so there's still that communication problem.

I thought I might just recount [the following] for the record. I was thinking of some of the names of the people, personalities that I had occasion to meet. Not all of them. Camille Chamoun, certainly. General Chehab. Abdel Osay Iran, who was the leader of the Shiites and speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. Sir John Philby, a teacher at AUB. I remember a fascinating afternoon in which, for three hours, he recounted how he had just been an archeologist and was sent out during World War One to find the Saud family. Did I mention that?

Q: *No.*

FUNSETH: Here's this legendary character. We had lunch at the American University Club. He recounts this story that I've got written down someplace. He was called to the Foreign Office of Intelligence and they told him that this guy by the name of Lawrence was the branch of the family of the Hashemite people. But there was another Arab in the Arabian Peninsula, the Saudi clan over in the East and they wanted him to get in touch with them to see what he was doing in this whole period of World War One. They told him there was a plane out in the airfield. The pilot would fly him. He remembers stopping in a book store and getting a bunch of road maps. He gets in this airplane. Open cockpit. I guess the pilot's in the front cockpit. He's got this road map and they're flying from England to France, stopping every few hours to refuel, and following these maps, and makes his way into the Arabian Peninsula into Eastern Arabia and finds old Ibn Saud, and that's how he established contact with him.

Did I mention Charles Malik, who was a fascinating person, coming from a little village of Huteron [Batroun??] near Tripoli, a Greek Orthodox? I went to school with a cousin, but he regarded himself as a nephew, Ilie Salem, at the School of Advanced International Studies. I came to know that family and the village he came from. Ilie Salem subsequently

## Library of Congress

became Foreign Minister of Lebanon. Then there was the Muslim leader, Sami Sol, and Afilie Afie Comoge Jumblatt, fascinating guy, who had this bifurcated persona in that he was the founder of this bi-Socialist Party in Lebanon and yet he was the heir of the Jumblatt clan which was one of two ruling clans of the Druze in Southern Lebanon. Here this guy was this feudal lord on the one hand and this Social Democrat on the other hand and lived in this ancestral home which was the Jumblatt castle. Then when the civil war broke out, he became a feudal lord again and not a Socialist. I remember I was sent down there by McClintock and established contact with him after our troops had landed. It was out of Beaugest. I'd been there on my way to Iran. I met a Lebanese student who took me to see Jumblatt and told me about the party, about the forming of this Blat party.

In this period I arrived again back at this place and they'd blown out the bridges. I remember having to cross on sort of a log and there was a sentry with Druze ammunition belts. They knew I was coming. I came out with my embassy car, which came so far. Then I had to walk up to the castle. They captured a French armored car.

Kamal Jumblatt, a Druze—they are kind of mystics and get involved in Chinese and Confucius, I think—knew me; actually, we knew one another very well. I was one of the few foreign homes he'd come to. So, I had lunch with him. He formed the Independent Druze Republic, he said with a smile. "There's my armored division; here's my Minister of Defense." He was introducing me to all these guys as cabinet ministers. He had a colleague, Semarge Delani, then I mentioned Rashid Karami from Tripoli, and Philip Takla. There was a whole cast of these characters. I think what was so interesting for me as a junior political officer was that I represented the American embassy. On the other hand, they're very open people. Very open society. Very friendly. Not very rank conscious. So if you established some sort of intellectual relationship, you had it

The guy I left out, who was very important, was Raymond Eddy, whose father had been President of Lebanon. There were two Eddy brothers—Raymond and Pierre. Raymond was head of the party and was a very close contact of mine. He, among others, argued

## Library of Congress

persuasively that the issue was not communist influence in Lebanon at that time, but President Chamoun's efforts to amend the constitution. Now to Chamoun's defense, I'll give them all the benefit of the doubt. I think Chamoun loved Lebanon and he thought he was protecting, in the first instance, the Maronites, and the soul of Lebanon. That was the whole issue. For Malik it was very much religion, tied up with nationalism. To protect that which goes back centuries, this Christian foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean.

*Q: Did you find this society very open?*

FUNSETH: You were in Saudi Arabia at this time?

Q: I was in Saudi Arabia. There was a whole different thing. I mean, we didn't have those contacts. The Saudis were a whole different breed of cat. Were there wheels within wheels within wheels in this Lebanese society? I mean, was it difficult to tell what was really happening?

FUNSETH: No, I don't think so. In fact, it probably spoiled me for the rest of my Foreign Service career as a political officer because it was so open and you had to discipline yourself and prioritize, because you didn't have enough time to talk to all the who were available to talk to.

There was a lot of intrigue going on at this time. I mean, this was, after all, 1956, the Eisenhower Doctrine, Nasser, and the Russians had a huge mission there. Intelligence officers all over the place. I remember there was a guy from the Russian Embassy, who was obviously assigned to me. I'm pretty sure he was KGB (Soviet Intelligence). We maintained contact. We'd see one another. Try to find out what the other side was thinking. He then surfaced as a Pravda or Investia correspondent when we landed. We've always known there was a close intelligence connection. I was getting from the FBIS (the U.S. Foreign Broadcasting Information Service). Here was a byline from this guy that the Marines landed, rolled into town; I'd led them; there were people throwing flowers and

## Library of Congress

cheering. I mean, there was absolutely no hostility. But Tass was reporting, "The Marines landed today into a hostile environment. The tanks rolled over children in the streets."

This guy came to see me and I read the article to him. I said, "Where does this BS come from?" without saying BS. It didn't bother him. He said, "All I was reporting was what the Cairo press was saying." I said, "Well, you oughta [ought to] hear yourself!" Anyway, I think you really could understand it. Obviously, I felt I understood it as well as you could as an outside observer and as a student of the Middle East.

*Q: Then you went to the USUN. You were there from*

FUNSETH: I had fallen in love with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, but Beirut really spoiled me. So, on April Fool's Day, the first one after I was in Beirut, I discussed it with my wife and put in that I just wanted to spend the rest of my career in the Mediterranean covering the former Roman Empire within site of the Med. I wanted to go, I thought, to Tunis and Morocco; a good place to go from Beirut. Unbeknownst to me, my reporting had come to the attention of Joe Sisco in [the State Department's] UN Affairs. I didn't know Joe Sisco. He was Deputy Office Director in UNP [United Nations/Political Affairs] in IO [International Organizations; got me, and I was assigned as the Officer in Charge of Relations with the new IAEA [International Atomic Energy and Outer Space].

*Q: This was something for which you were well qualified.*

FUNSETH: It was not something I was terribly interested in, I can tell you. I came into UNP. That would have been '59, '60, '61; a two-year tour. It turned out I didn't say too long in UNP. We were in the old New State. The annex was built while we were there. The head of IO was Francis Wilcox. This was the end of the Eisenhower [Administration]. Henry Cabot Lodge was in New York, but we never saw him when he was in Washington because he never came into the State Department as far as I know. He stayed at the Metropolitan Club and was in the White House. He emphasized his Cabinet rank and had nothing to do with the State Department. I mention this because I want to share an

## Library of Congress

amusing story about how we handled when Adlai Stevenson came in. I think Woody Walner was Wilcox's Deputy. Bill Cargo, who was not far from me in Arlington, was the Director of UN Political Affairs. Sisco was the Deputy. There were some interesting people. Virginia Hartley, I remember, who was I think, a lawyer. But she'd been President at San Francisco.

In 1959, there were some people who'd been involved in the creation of the UN thing and probably were involved with Koslovski and Cordell Hull, something I'd examined in my graduate thesis. Elizabeth Brown was the officer in charge of the Political side. Bill Buffam was with her. I remember I shared an office with Steve Palmer and the other two officers were Mike Millem and Bob Oakley. We were UN Political. There were a couple of things that I remember. No one would forget meeting Henry Cabot Lodge, who reigned at the U.S. Mission [to the United Nations in New York]. Anyone who has met him will not forget it. Hammarskjold, of course, was Secretary General. In that period, John Foster Dulles became ill and Christian Herter became Secretary of State. Just think of the Department and its stratification and S/S [Staff Secretariat], the Secretary, and clearances that existed when you retired and when I retired.

Then this story. I can't remember what the issue was because there were two issues I covered in that two year period. One was Africa and the whole peacekeeping operation in the Congo and the other was Southeast Asia. I'll mention each of those briefly. One night, I had drafted a cable for the Secretary's signature on the green form that you type and had gotten it all cleared. I was up front with Sisco and Wilcox and somebody. Remember the old Lobby on 21st Street. They said, "The Secretary's getting ready to leave his office. Take your cable down and wait for him in the lobby and get him to sign it." So, I'm an FSO-7, so I took the elevator down and waited. It was sort of like, I guess someone earlier might have felt when he saw Franklin D. Roosevelt. I didn't realize that Mr. Herter was crippled with arthritis. Out of this private elevator comes Mr. Herter. Well, he had two canes. Very difficult. He walked over to the desk; there were no guards in those days. No one was there as far as I can remember. It was 7:00 or 8:00 in the evening. He said, "Oh,



## Library of Congress

you're Mr. Funseth in UNP. You have something for me?" I said, "Yes, sir." He took it over to the little receptionist's desk. No one was there. Read the cable. Asked me a question or two about it, signed it, and said. "Very good. Good night."

Which leads into "what if?" I think Hammarskjold took the initiative, but at that time in Southeast Asia in North Vietnam the Pathet Lao occupied two provinces in the northeastern sector of Laos. That was all. I remember there was a King then and he had a brother who was the Red Prince. Anyway, Hammarskjold got this idea that you establish a [perimeter ?] in Southeast Asia, put a fence up literally, around these two provinces from what divided north and south Vietnam. He had a UN Observer Force there. Behind that barrier, you have something called the UN Mekong River Development Program.

The thought of working in UN Affairs was that regardless of your rank you were given things to do. I was officer-in-charge of this thing and drafted the letters for Herter, back to Hammarskjold. I remember this was right leading up to the elections in '60, I guess. It really came through down through the years. At one time, we had a meeting with the French and the British to discuss this. This isn't completely fair, but the one thing I remember about the meeting was the British were primarily exploiting any British commercial opportunities and any such scheme so that British firms. This guy was talking about Bailey Bridges. All the Frenchman was interested in was to protect the primacy of the French language. Anyway, I often remember, "what if", because it got lost in the elections and then, if you remember, Laos became very important under Kennedy.

Then we'd moved into the new building and President Kennedy used to have his press conference in our auditorium, had a big map of Laos. Then he very quickly decided that he didn't—maybe a lesson for our subsequent Presidents—that our vital interests weren't involved in Laos and he lost interest in it.

The assistant secretary or deputy assistant secretary was GrahaParsons, I think?

## Library of Congress

*Q: Jeff Parsons.*

FUNSETH: Jeff Parsons. He was very much involved in Laos. I'll always remember the story that Kennedy introduced him to the Swedish foreign minister and said, "Mr. Prime Minister, I want to present to you a very distinguished American diplomat, Ambassador Parsons, who is the greatest living expert in the world on Laos. Therefore, I am sending him to Stockholm as the next U.S. Ambassador." So Laos went off the screen. But what Hammarskjold had in mind was intriguing. Nothing ever happened to it.

The other big thing I was involved in, which again was another example. Almost every chapter of my Foreign Service career I had some involvement with the American military. This was in the Congo in that whole period with the eastern Congo seceding, Katanga, and all that thing. Hammarskjold was subsequently killed in that upset. What happened, and I've been reminded of it under present peacekeeping operations. I guess if I had more time, I'd write a letter to the editor, but it wouldn't do any good anyway. But we seem to have forgotten in UN peacekeeping that at the very beginning, we didn't provide ground troops. We provided logistical support. We did the airlift and we airlifted men and supplies into the Congo. I was the principal contact with the Defense Department. That was my assignment and I was dealing with military officers much more senior to me in rank—Colonels and Captains, even Generals and Admirals. We developed a relationship over the telephone. They kept inviting me over. I remember Sisco and Cargo saying, "If you go over, and they see how junior you are, you're going to blow it. Your credibility." They kept holding me off. So finally, when it was all over, I came over and we had a lunch in the flag office. They probably figured out what it was. I think they were a little surprised at my rank. But I'll tell you the thing I learned. We used to have some pretty frank exchanges. They took me into a room. It was the Joint Chiefs with all their tape recordings, in which they recorded every phone conversation they'd had with me. They had a record of everything we in the Department said. But, again, it was, as I look back on it, first of all you had a

## Library of Congress

relationship with them and you had to be responsive to them and they did provide it, but we weren't involved in providing ground troops. We provided the logistical support.

I want to tell you a story about Adlai Stevenson. The election happened. Harlan Cleveland was succeeding Francis Wilcox. Then Adlai Stevenson, like Lodge, got the consolation prize. He wanted to be Secretary of State. Very similar to Lodge. He was made UN Rep. With Cabinet rank. I remember sitting in the front office. It's the same suite of offices that we originally went into. Who has pride of authorship? We all participated in it. Anyway, you know how these assistant secretary offices are. You have the assistant secretary and it's paneled. Then as you get further away where the staff sits, until you get to the end of the suite, it isn't carpeted. So they got this idea that the last office in the whole suite that was also sort of at the end, they extended a corridor carpet down to that office, made it really fancy. I'll always remember because I was in the welcoming party. I think I went down to the lobby and brought Governor Stevenson up, and I really admired him. Brought him up—jovial and cheerful—we'd orchestrated the whole thing. At the end of the meeting, Harlan Cleveland says, “Governor, I want to show you your office when you're in Washington.” He walks him down this new stretch of carpet down to the end of the suite, and there was this office. Stevenson looked around and said, “Very nice!” So whenever he came to Washington, he always sat in that office. But it promoted a much closer relationship.

*Q: Henry Cabot Lodge. They said he reigned rather than . How did people at IO when you were there, what did they feel about him?*

FUNSETH: Remember again, this is the '50s. There were books then being written, “The other State Department.” The issue wasn't resolved after all; it came very much to the head under Jeanne Kirkpatrick. “The Other State Department.” I mean, the bristling in New York; that they got instructions from the State Department to carry out. PermRep [permanent representative] up there calling the White House directly, or alleging that he had. You never know whom he's actually spoken to. Then they say, “Well, the President doesn't want to do this, or the White House doesn't want to do that.” So I think it's more,

## Library of Congress

going back to the origins of it, the whole idea of taking instructions. People who are associated with the UN, they had a different attitude at the UN in the '50s and subsequent years, that it could do more things. People wanting to sublimate our bilateral interests. So there was this tension that's still there, but was much more so then.

I really felt that I appreciated the limitations of the United Nations from my Lebanese experience. But that wasn't the sentiment in IO when I arrived. There used to be an annual circular telegram; you may remember. It went to all posts. Long airgram. Twenty pages. It listed every agenda item for the upcoming General Assembly. Every embassy was instructed to go in and get their government to support the United States on all of these issues. It was drafted with the State Department in mind. I remember when I came in the first fall. I arrived in September and this thing was under discussion. I said, "Do you have any idea how this instruction is carried out? I carried out that instruction in Lebanon. The Bureau of International Organization Affairs in the Lebanese Foreign Ministry consisted of two people. I'll never forget this was one of the first instructions I carried out as political officer. My first assignment. I made an appointment with this official and went to the Lebanese Foreign Ministry. It was sort of in a converted billet. Found my way, knocked on the door and the guy said 'Come in.' I couldn't find the person because there were piles of UN reports that were coming in. Imagine if all the UN reports in any given year were put in one room. In the middle of this skyscraper was this one Lebanese. I said, 'I've come in to discuss this instruction.' He was the one who had to carry it out." Charles Malik was not there, but a personality equivalent to that explained to me, "I'm not going to tell Hajim Bey in New York how to vote." We didn't really grasp how much independence a PermRep has in New York. Never mind the politics of it, just the technical how do you carry out an instruction?" A one man bureau in Beirut or dozens of other countries can't keep track of every agenda item in all six committees.

Q: There are two things I'd like to put in here. Two of my interviews. One was, I think, in Upper Volta or something, where our ambassador went in to ask support on something dealing with whale fishing. The Foreign Minister said, "Well, we'll certainly support you,

## Library of Congress

but tell me, what is a whale?" Another one was going to get Chad to keep the Soviets from overflying to Cuba. They assured us they would, but where was Cuba? These things just aren't on their agenda. Someone can come to us with the same problem that we wouldn't know. Almost not the futility, but the resources that were tied up in trying to get UN votes. Did they ever get a realistic view of how the people in the field did it? Or was this something that they did and they were so bound up that they thought everybody was expending all their capital, our embassies, in order to get the UN votes on

FUNSETH: We still do. I mean, that's what diplomacy is all about. Hopefully, you have to balance some of that out. In subsequent years, I was a member of the delegation and I remember spending a day in the Secretariat Building—the General Assembly—I'd been there all day. Crossing over [to the U.S. delegation offices] to write my telegrams at 8:00 at night, I realized, as I'd come out of the building and was walking across, that for some time I'd began to feel that this was the world. An underworld.

Overall, I really think the UN has served our interests and we've been a responsible leader in it. It is useful. I mean, that's never been a question in my mind. It's not to have exaggerated expectations. We still have. And we sort of refer to it as if it's an independent body of some kind. We don't realize it's just an organization of state. It's easy to forget—the UN this, the UN that. It's sort of like saying, "The Foreign Service." As if there's something really a corporal body of the Foreign Service. There isn't. People like to say, "Why doesn't the Foreign Service do this or that?" There's no Foreign Service to act that way. We're a collection of individuals. The UN is sort of like that. Now, with variations. It does have a Secretary General who can presume to speak on its behalf, so it does have an independent voice. But we certainly did have expectations of the UN that weren't realized. We had to adjust accordingly. And we did!

Q: What about the Congo business during this first great effort of the UN? How did we view what was happening in the Congo? Were we seeing this in East/West terms? I'm talking about in IO.

## Library of Congress

FUNSETH: I honestly can't remember. I don't think the Russians really started playing a strong hand in Africa until much later, in Angola, for example. They didn't have airlift capabilities. I can remember one point, and it wasn't then, it was some years later, maybe even in the '60s. The Soviets didn't have experience in a big airlift far from their country. They tried one once and ran into a little trouble, and called the whole thing off. It took them some years before they gained the confidence of being able to operate an extended air arm. My own recollection, and I haven't gone back and read the history of it, and these are many years ago, almost forty. My recollection is that this was more associated with the issue of colonialism rather than the issue of the East/West and the creation of independent states in Africa and members of the United Nations, and helping these new states develop and become democracies. I think that was the issue in the '50s.

*Q: Again, while you were there, did you get any impression about throle of Arab countries?*

FUNSETH: This was again right after Suez. The whole UNRA. I was the UNRA Desk Officer also. A lot of U.S. support for UNRA. I mean, UNRA was then stationed in Lebanon—the headquarters—and America was the head of UNRA. Henry Labouisse, remember that name? Just think back how things have changed. UNRA isn't even in Lebanon. It's in Vienna. Very few, or no American staffers are safe to go into Lebanon. So how UNRA has changed. The borders of Israel are different. This was before the war in the '60s.

*Q: You left there and you didn't get back to your beloveMediterranean.*

FUNSETH: Never. Never. Then there was a personnel system just about that point in time I was in UNP and my recollection is that Personnel came up with a new requirement that in order to get promoted to almost anything you had to have experience in all cones [skill area, such as political, consular etc.]. I'd been a political officer, I'd had information experience, but I hadn't had consular experience. So I was told in Personnel that before I could go back into a political job, I'd have to be a consular officer. So I wound up being assigned to Bordeaux for that reason.

## Library of Congress

*Q: You were there from '61 to '64.*

FUNSETH: I originally went out on a two-year tour to be a vice consul in Bordeaux and then be transferred to Paris as a political Officer. While I was in Bordeaux, they changed the tour. I think a few weeks before I went on home leave, in order to save money, the Department ruled that I wasn't eligible for home leave until after the third year. So I stayed another year in Bordeaux, lost out on a transfer to Paris, and then subsequently was stationed in the department.

*Q: What were you doing in Bordeaux?*

FUNSETH: Well, in Bordeaux, originally when I arrived there, it was a four-person post: principal officer, deputy principal officer, a vice consul in charge of sort of the citizenship side, and a vice consul in charge of the visa side. I was that number three. The number two position got abolished in some sort of an economy way and again, as always happens, the function to be abolished—the deputy job was the reporting officer. Well, the principal officer said to me, “You're going to do the reporting and do what you've been doing.” So I did and, as it turned out in that period, each of the principal officers left the Service after one year. So I was in charge of the post for extended periods. I had three principal officers in three years. It was '61, '62, '63, '64.

So I basically, became the deputy soon after arriving, and had so many changes in the principal officer slot, was acting for a long time. So I really was in charge of the consulate. Interesting post. One of several that lays claim to being the oldest post in the Foreign Service. Dates back to the Continental Congress. Indeed, the first consul was wealthy, came from a prosperous [family], was a ship agent from Georgetown and had enough money to build a very handsome building called the Fenwick House, which was the offices of the French line. Pretty much since then we've had a post. It was closed during World War II.

## Library of Congress

Kennedy was President; one of the most popular American Presidents since Thomas Jefferson in France. He and Mrs. Kennedy made a big impression on the French people. DeGaulle had come back to power. The mayor of Bordeaux was a speaker of the French parliament—a distinguished French political leader by the name of Jacques Chaban-Delmas, who'd been in the French Underground, had been mayor of Paris during the occupation. The story of "Is Paris Burning?" is tied in with this guy, a real hero.

Our consular district was south of the Loire river, the whole southwest of France including the Basque country to Toulouse, that whole area. We had some American military installations in the area. Bordeaux was an important port. When I arrived, General Gavin was the Ambassador. He was succeeded by Charles Bowen. Cecil Lyon was the Minister under both while I was there.

It was personally interesting for me. I visited La Rochelle, where my ancestors came from, on my mother's side, who had emigrated to Quebec in the 17th Century. At least my grandmother's family were Huguenots. I read recently that in order for a Huguenot to get an exit permit, they had to convert to Catholicism. In my mother's family, they were Catholics, but probably both of them were Huguenot families who were leaving the area, and they emigrated to French Canada in 1628, I think.

I learned a couple of things. I am again reminded of the role a Foreign Service local plays. It was something I commented on in my retirement.

*Q: They're called Foreign Service nationals employees now.*

FUNSETH: Right. In Tabriz, for example, there was a man there named Mohammed Ali Asouf, who was hired when the post was opened during World War I, and every time we closed it he'd take the seals home and the consular files. Then, when we reopened, he'd come back. I never felt that we were really fair to them as employers. Then in Bordeaux, we had this man; his name was Robert Artisian. He has since died. He had worked



## Library of Congress

for us for many, many years; was our senior commercial employee. I remember the department of Commerce thought he was the best one in the world; he generated more export opportunities. But, again, during the occupation he had taken the seals home and classified papers under great personal risk, buried them under his house, and then when we reopened. He said that after the War, he hadn't heard anything. He finally got a letter and he thought it might be a thank you. It was a letter to inform him that the years when the consulate was closed would be subtracted from his years of service for purposes of retirement. I helped, among others, to get him an honor award to recognize his great service during that period.

Another thing I remember, we had a lot of locals [foreign service nationals] who were on sort of temporary [hire]. I converted all of them to permanent employees. Another thing I first learned that I didn't really grasp the full meaning of until recent years. The first inkling I had—I'm talking about the French occupation then. I was walking with Artisian near the square in front of the opera house and, not using the acronym, but the full words, Artisian points to this prominent Bordelais and says, "That son-of-a-bitch was in the SS during the occupation!" I remember talking to him about it and got the impression that an amount of collaboration and going along was quite prevalent in Bordeaux and there weren't that many people in the Underground. There were people in the Underground. Another time I was with Artisian and he pointed out a little old French lady carrying her baguette of bread going home and he said, "You see that woman? I always had at least one and sometimes three downed American pilots in the basement of her house. She was part of the Underground spiriting American pilots out through Spain." That was the first sort of eye-opener I had. The extent of cooperation with the Nazis was more than I realized.

*Q: It's still an issue in France. It's almost one they don't...*

FUNSETH: Sure, they're now addressing it! It was a factor. I remember the deputy of Bordeaux was the sort of super [Gestapo ?] in several provinces. He had a deputy who was a very senior officer, and a talented, attractive guy. If you've ever met any of the

## Library of Congress

French civil servants in the prefectural service of the ministry of Interior. They're absolutely top flight and comparable to the Foreign Service. Competitive, it's considered a real plum. But this guy had been associated with the Vichy regime. So he was capped. He wasn't going to go any higher than he had.

There were a couple of things, a lot of things in Bordeaux, but of course there are a lot of things you really remember. I remember DeGaulle running for reelection, meeting Chaban-Delmas. I remember when I was acting principal officer, DeGaulle made this gesture to Germany. It was the first big effort for sort of a Franco/German Entente. He invited Adenauer on a state visit to France, the first German Chancellor. There were mixed feelings in France. He wanted him to go outside of Paris. There was no place that was eager to have this German Chancellor, although it was nothing against Adenauer. But again, it was '61, '62, '63. Chaban offered Bordeaux. It was quite interesting, the lead up to Adenauer's arrival. There was a big debate in Bordeaux. I remember going up to, there was sort of an International Club coming out of the EEC, I suspect. I remember this big debate about welcoming Adenauer to Bordeaux. I'll always remember this young French professor stood up and said, "I can't join in any welcome as a Frenchman to a German chancellor coming to Bordeaux. But I can welcome him as a European welcoming another European."

I remember Artisian telling me he was coming to work and the bus driver—you can just see this bus coming down this narrow street and the German flags on all the flagposts because this was the road out of town to Modesque's residence where Adenauer was going—is shouting to everybody and nobody: "Every time I see one of these flags, I want to drive my bus into the lampposts and knock the goddamn thing down!" And Adenauer arrived. As acting principal officer, I had the honor of meeting him. I was presented to Adenauer and I realized it was a historic occasion, this arrival of an unknown.

Another thing that I'll always remember about Bordeaux. Well, a couple of things. I arrived there in September, and November 11 is a big day. (France doesn't celebrate World

## Library of Congress

War II. They celebrate World War I.) There's a suburb right outside of Bordeaux called Tolerance and I was told by the principal officer that Tolerance always laid a wreath and flowers on the remaining graves of the Americans from World War One, and the American Consulate was represented, since 1918, in this ceremony every year. I was a new arrival, so I would have the honor of representing the United States of America. The reason I had the honor was it usually was a cold and rainy day. I remember going to Tolerance - a little city hall - and we marched through the streets. Cold, drenching rain. We laid a wreath on the American grave, then on the French, and then went back to the city hall, the auditorium. There was a French liqueur, Perneau, or something like that. One of the highlights of the day was it was all you could drink and all the veterans, and I gave my first speech in French. I remember it was a good speech. Talked about how we're still bound together, the fight for freedom, and all that. The mayor of Tolerance was the town doctor. He got up and gave a speech in response to what I said and said he didn't disagree with what I said, but, "We must also remember the sacrifices." He remembered, I think it was his father. But the railroad station was on the other side of the river in Bordeaux. They hadn't built a bridge across it. He said, "I remember seeing my uncle going off to Verdun and he never came back." I think he was the one who said there was a village between Bordeaux and Toulouse. There's a monument. "Every man over 18 was killed at Verdun." It was interesting. First, he was right; remember the sacrifice. But it was also illuminating. Here was this man who had not fought in World War One, but probably in World War Two, and they were defeated in World War Two, but they hadn't forgotten Verdun.

But it also demonstrated to me within a month or two after I arrived there, that there was great affection and admiration in that area towards the United States. On the Fourth of July, spontaneously, not organized, I remember going down—I'd heard about it but no one had really said anything—driving down to hoist a large American flag in front of the consulate on the fourth of July. American flags all over Bordeaux! Ordinary people had faded flags; banks had flags! We were the only foreign flag flown over the city hall at

## Library of Congress

Bordeaux on our National Day! Huge American flag flying over the city. It was affection and admiration and real genuine feelings towards the United States.

*Q: How were the American soldiers doing there? This was close to the time when basically DeGaulle . . .*

FUNSETH: Very well. Yes, but that was not a popular decision in France. I suppose one of the things I'll remember forever was when I was in Bordeaux, Kennedy was assassinated. You'd probably never forget it no matter where you were, but here I was in Bordeaux, the American consulate. I remember someone called and I turned on the radio and got the news and went down to the consulate. Thought I oughta be there. You know, the good old Foreign Service regulations tell you what to do when the President dies! Anyway, we were in a lovely old building. There are a lot of these in Bordeaux. Built in the 17th and 18th centuries by people associated with shipping - handsome residences - in which the business would sort of be on the first floor and the negotiation or whatever would be upstairs. Well, this building that we were in, the Barkley's Bank building, occupied the ground floor. We were on the premiere #tage, which had been the living quarters, then on the second floor the bank manager had his apartment. The office I had was registered as 17th Century—a beautiful room! Anyway, I went down there, and as I'm going up the landing, I meet the manager of the bank. Tears in his eyes! Throws his arms around me. Then I remember on Thursday or Friday, it seems to me, I read in the regulations: the black crepe you're supposed to fly on the front. I sent an employee down. All of our employees were in various degrees of emotion. But I remember, I think it was Christianne Lumatay, I sent to the department store to find some black crepe. She came back and told me that when the salesgirl recognized she was from the Consulate, she opened her eyes and said, "Pour le Pr#sident?" Christianne said, "Yes." And the girl, tears flowing down her cheeks as she measured out the crepe, in memory of Kennedy. We had a line of people that never ended signing the book—all walks of life. We decided to have a memorial mass at the time of the mass that was taking place here in Washington. The consul general decided he wanted it in the cathedral. So I went over and saw the Archbishop. There's

## Library of Congress

another church in Bordeaux that's a very special church. He thought it ought to be there, and he was afraid the cathedral which seated thousands of people—I think it was to be at five o'clock—that people wouldn't be able to come. Because of work and going home; it was an awkward time. We wanted it at the exact time it was taking place here. So he was afraid it wouldn't be full and this would be mistakenly seen as somehow lack of respect or affection which wasn't the case. Anyway, we decided to have it at the cathedral which, incidentally, is the site where Eleanor of Aquitaine was married, across from Jacques Chaban-Delmas' Hotel de Ville. If you've ever been in France, the veterans' organizations, I remember they called up and said they wanted to be there and wanted to form a guard of honor and would we review them? So, we drove over, my wife and the consulate general and the other consuls and their wives and we went to the city hall first and there were some of the guys I'd seen in Tolerance all lined up; most of them from World War One. Then we walked over to the Cathedral. It's 300 years old and it's sort of settled several feet below. I don't know where they found the flag because we provided one. All of our flags were borrowed and indeed I provided the flag that had flown in front of our consulate to put over the coffin that they had, as they do in Europe, for the person to be remembered. They had this huge American flag in the entrance and as we walked into it, you could hear this music being played on this organ—like a hymn. At first, I didn't recognize it. I mean it was familiar, but it was the Star Spangled Banner played by the organist like a hymn. The Cathedral was packed. They had this huge flag for a king, to cover the coffin and a 10 foot candelabra and seated next to it. You just felt that Kennedy's body was there. And then that night there was a rural parish outside of town and they were going to have a memorial service at 8:00 in the evening. The priest called and asked if someone from the Consulate would go. I went out. It was as magnificent as the one in the cathedral. Yet here it was just a rural parish with farmers coming in, and it was packed for Kennedy.

Q: It's really very difficult in these days to duplicate this. Kennedy was under the new generation. A new hope for everybody. I mean, as realists in the Foreign Service, I've always been sort of amazed. I was in Belgrade at the time and we had a memorial service

## Library of Congress

at the Catholic cathedral, which was small. It was packed with communist officials. The first time many of them had ever been in church except when they were baptized. Did troops cause a problem for you, or not? I mean, American troops.

FUNSETH: We had no incidents. We took care of their citizenship needs. We had no problems with American military. They were still there when I left. It was the supply line. One of the largest ammunition dumps in Europe was south of Bordeaux. They all come through the port of Bordeaux. It was a logistic lifeline. Then in La Rochelle there was a port.

The other thing I hadn't—I just thought of it—reminding me, I was a Naval officer in World War II. But in both Bordeaux and in La Rochelle were [these bunkers]. I tell you, they really looked ominous when you see them. These huge concrete things. You can't destroy them. They're built so powerfully. I don't know what they do with them in Bordeaux. In La Rochelle they use them as an underground boat marina. But I mean there's just something stealth-like about them.

*Q: What about the communist party? Is it very strong in Bordeaux?*

FUNSETH: It was strong in Bordeaux. That's a good question, Stu, because I remember this big election I covered. I was the only foreign consul that certainly did it. But, also having been a newspaper reporter, I suppose, I went to all the rallies. They had big rallies and DeGaulle's Party, and the radical socialists, and the socialist's home . And I went to the communist's. It was an open meeting. Very interesting. They were all held in the auditorium in the city hall. Public auditorium. And the communist, I think, was the last one. You know, you'd go in, and it was decorated with the party flags all over the place. And then, whoever they were supporting—DeGaulle or whomever else. But for the communists, they'd taken down the French Flag and the communist flag was flying over. A different group of people. It sort of reminded me of a volunteer fire department. They had the auxiliary. It was very much of a social thing. Husbands and wives and children and

## Library of Congress

the junior auxiliary. "We have to raise money because we don't have the money that the bourgeoisie and the capitalists do", I mean the jargon was all different. But there wasn't much talked about Vive La France. It was mostly vive the people. There was a lot of talk of Marxist/Leninism. You know, that famous head of the French Communist party for decades was still head of it.

I'll always remember at the end of the rally when they were talking about how we need money so our candidates can compete against the capitalists. There were four very attractive young French girls from the Communist Youth League who were collecting the money. They had a hammer and sickle flag and people were giving their money to the Communist party. The communists controlled the labor unions. CGT, the docks and the shipyards. The Marcel Darceau Aviation plant, where DeGaulle was building his nuclear strike force, the "force that flopped", was CGT dominated. They never were a significant voice. The Bordeaux area was pretty strong DeGaullist and radical Socialist.

I have to remark on the difference between General Gavin and Charles Bohlen as ambassador. There was a wine-tasting competition, une tasse de vin, or whatever, at this wine drinking fraternity. It was a trade promotion. At the time of the harvest, they dressed in robes. Like honorary degrees at a distinguished college, people try to bring in distinguished people. Huge luncheons or dinners at a chateaux, 400 people, fantastic wine. When Gavin came down—it was the first year I was there. They give you this glass of wine and you smell it and you're supposed to guess what it is, and unless you give the right answer you cannot become a commandant of the vigneron. But it's all part of a joke. I mean, the guy whispers in your ear what it is and you go through the motions and smell it, and then you say what year it is and what the chateaux is. I remember an unnamed person in Paris called me and said General Gavin's schedule was down to the minute. You know, the ambassador arrives one minute, everything minute by minute. Well, the head of the ceremonies was the owner of the Chateaux Gloria, which was then not marketed in the United States. I remember encouraging him to market it because it's across the street from Beshville. It's a darn good wine, but it doesn't sell for the same price. His name was

## Library of Congress

Henri Martet. He also owned the Bordeaux football team. Anyway, I remember telling the Embassy, "You know, I haven't been here very long but . . . I mean, I have no idea. Tell him not to worry about it! When he gets here, we'll tell him. We probably won't decide until that day." Well, that wasn't good enough for General Gavin. I was so embarrassed. Finally, we bugged them and bugged them and Martet told us what wine it would be and what year, and we conveyed that and the visit was a great success.

Then Bohlen came. Totally relaxed, you know. The question never came up. I sort of told him to stay loose on it and then, I think it was the chateaux where he was staying. (I think Joan Kennedy was there at the same time). Anyway, he was great. We gave him a background of the chateaux. He was fluent in French. He stood up and went through the whole thing. Swirled the glass around, bouquet and the name of the chateau, and the whole works.

Q: I take it the whole time there, there weren't any major issues that the embassy was particularly concerned about in Bordeaux, that they were pressing you on?

FUNSETH: Well, you know, yes, it was the whole period of DeGaulle, this business of Adenauer coming down was a big event. But we were primarily a consulate promoting trade and commerce, protecting American citizens, and issuing visas. We did weekly political reports on developments in Southwest France, which covered quite an area. Basque separatism. I remember we reported on it when the French still didn't recognize they had a problem with the Basques! And they did. We reported on that, the DeGaulle thing, Adenauer, there were elections in that period. Trade promotion. We were a very good post on trade promotion, protection. We had a lot of American citizens living in the area. I remember the University of California established a junior year abroad at the University of Bordeaux. Very impressive! They had a lot of resources. It was a very interesting

Q: *Sounds like you had a good, solid . . .*



## Library of Congress

FUNSETH: Three years. It was a real great, and I've always been very partial on these constituent posts. I remember there was an election there and, because we were closer to what was going on—I can't remember what the outcome was—read all the local papers. We subscribed to every newspaper in the province, primarily probably for trade opportunities, but also just doing your job so you understood what's going on. And absorbing all that. I remember I called the election much closer than the embassy did. We just knew more of what was going on. In Europe you have prominent political figures come back home. I mean Marcel Foureaux, the head of the Socialist Party, was Mayor of a nearby town. Each of these mayors were important political personalities in Paris and they came home a lot. We had more access to Chaban-Delmas than people in Paris did. I thought, in our area, and I'm sure the other consulates did, we certainly promoted trade. We had a good cultural and information program and represented the United States.

*Q: We'll stop at this point now and next time we'll pick up when you left Bordeaux.*

FUNSETH: Then I became Portuguese Desk Officer in Iberian Affairs and had an extended period in the Department.

*Q: Alright. Fine. We'll pick that up then.*

[interview not completed]

[end of interview]